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SUBJECT: THAI JUDICIAL COMMISSION UNANIMOUSLY ELECTS NEW SUPREME COURT PRESIDENT

NEW SUPREME COURT PRESIDENT ELECTED

¶11. (U) On July 25, the Thai Judicial Commission (JC) unanimously elected Mr. Chanchai Likhitjitta, 59, to be the new President of the Supreme Court. Chanchai will replace Mr. Supphachai Phoo-ngam, who will retire on September 30. Chanchai has served on the Supreme Court since 1998, and is currently the Court's Third Vice-President. As President of the Supreme Court, Chanchai will be in charge of administrative functions and will not adjudicate cases.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE THAI SUPREME COURT

¶12. (U) The 15-member JC that elected Mr. Chanchai is composed of the Supreme Court President and fourteen commissioners. These commissioners are elected from among judges at all levels of the national court system. In addition to electing the court's President, the JC is tasked with making judicial appointments, promotions and transfers, and has the power to discipline sitting judges. The election of the President is generally viewed as an apolitical process.

¶13. (U) The full membership of the Thai Supreme Court consists of 86 justices. When a case is brought before the Supreme Court, three justices from among their number are chosen to hear it, and together they issue a single verdict. Supreme Court appointments have generally not been a source of controversy in Thailand. The election of Mr. Chanchai was barely covered in the Thai press, and there was no national debate about his beliefs or political ideology.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

¶14. (U) Chanchai Likhitjitta was born on April 25, 1946. He received a BA in Law from Thammasat University in 1969 and was appointed to the Thai Bar in 1971. He began his career as an Assistant Judge in 1972, and was appointed as a Civil Court Judge in 1987, and a Judge of the Court of Appeal in **¶1990**. He was appointed to the Supreme Court in 1998, and became the Court's Third Vice-President (out of a total of three) in 2004.

BOYCE